



PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/29244>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2017-12-05 and may be subject to change.

DE NOVIS LIBRIS IUDICIA

N. HOLZBERG, *Die antike Fabel. Eine Einführung*. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993. V, 131 pp. Pr. DM 24,80.

This is a truly inspiring book. The lively introduction to an unduly neglected literary genre draws attention to so many scholarly *desiderata* that it cannot but stimulate future *Fabelforscher* to get to work. One important *desideratum* is already fulfilled by the book itself: a one-volume introduction to the field did thus far not exist.

In the *Einleitung* of his *Einführung*, Holzberg states his modest but honest aim: to show that fables are the daily bread¹⁾ of world literature. He first gives a clear overview of the complex fable tradition, as well as a fair *Bewertung* of available text editions. Then he describes the “desolaten Zustand” (8) of modern fable scholarship, either utterly neglecting the fable corpus or focusing exclusively on the history and reconstruction of extant fable collections. *En passant* he pleads both for an *endgültige Beseitigung* of Halm’s Teubner text, outdated but still *en vogue*²⁾, and for a rehabilitation of Nøjgaard’s underestimated but outstanding interpretational analyses³⁾.

The first chapter concentrates on fables occurring *outside* collections. Holzberg’s overview of the evidence is both incomplete and overcomplete, as many passages are absent from his list, whereas others⁴⁾ are unjustly included; admittedly, the same must be said of previous synopses. Holzberg rightly remarks: “Die Gruppe der außerhalb von Fabelbüchern erscheinenden Fabeln bzw. Fabelanspielungen ist besonders schwer zu erschließen, weil diese Texte weder jemals in einer den modernen Ansprüchen genügenden Gesamtausgabe vereinigt noch in einem zuverlässigen und bequem benutzbaren Repertorium aufgelistet wurden.” The present reviewer’s dissertation⁵⁾ aims at filling this lacuna to some extent.

Holzberg favours a monogenetic genre theory, viewing Mesopotamia as the “Heimat der Gattung”. In this connection, he interprets the figure of Aesop, the genre’s legendary founding father, as a symbol of the Hellenized oriental fabulists who transferred fabular materials to Greece. He rightly opposes modern theorists who confine the genre’s functions, narrative types, or characters, and draws attention to its remarkable multiplicity in these respects. Fables may have persuasive, philosophical, and satirical functions; collections unite typically short, didactic stories, aetiologies, and

Rangstreite; characters may be of all kinds. In itself, Holzberg is entirely right when challenging monistic genre descriptions and pointing to fable's elusive diversity. However, his general remarks allow for some corrections. Firstly, his functional tripartition is too schematic; for example, philosophers may use fables with additional persuasive (e.g. Pl. *Phdr.* 259b-d) and satirical functions (e.g. Arist. *Mele.* 2.3, 356b13-15). Secondly, aetiologies are myths rather than *Sagas*; Callimachus' "Lydian" dispute (*Iamb.* 4, fr. 194 Pfeiffer) may be a subtle reference to Aesop, whom the librarian previously (*Iamb.* 2, fr. 192 Pfeiffer) had said to be "of Sardis". Thirdly, the idea that fables "in denen ausschließlich Tiere agieren die weitaus größte Gruppe [bilden]—und dies gilt dann auch für die Fabeln späterer Epochen der Antike" is widespread but untrue⁶). Finally, Holzberg may be right in proclaiming—in Perry's wake—Theon's definition "am überzeugendsten", his translation of μῦθος ἐστὶ λόγος ψευδῆς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν (*Prog.* 3) by "eine Fabel ist eine fiktionale Erzählung, die eine Wahrheit abbildet", d.h. aus der sich eine Wahrheit (= Lehre) entnehmen läßt" is based on a debatable interpretation of the second half of the definition; εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν points to the genre's desired verisimilitude, which should compensate for its obvious fictitiousness⁷).

The aforesaid plurality, Holzberg observes, contrasts with the genre's formal unity, both structurally and linguistically. Its typical narrative structure is tripartite ("Exposition—Aktion—Schlußwort [Nøjgaard's *réplique finale*]"), while the link with the context has a quasi-formular introduction (οὕτω δὲ καί...). Again, this is correct, but some minor points may be made. Holzberg considers Aristophanes' second Sybaritic fable (*V.* 1435-1440) to be tripartite and a *scolion* (9, fr. 892 *PMG*) to be bipartite; however, the former's alleged second stage is just a comically instantaneous incorporation of the addressee's interjection, whereas the latter is not completely self-contained. Holzberg's inclusion of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* fable (717-736) among those featuring the typical fable-context formula mentioned above apparently presupposes a debatable interpretation of πάντα⁸).

Holzberg discusses Perry's plausible theory that the fable collection by Demetrius of Phalerum (*ap.* D.L. 5.80-81 = fr. 112 Wehrli) was a *primeur*, and he cautions that speculations about its *quondam* contents tend to obscure the fact that its only remnants are its title. Still, an impression may be gained from *PRyl.* 493 (and perhaps *PKöln* 2.64): promythia served as handy indexes for writers search-

ing appropriate fables; the fables were summarized in a plain style, allowing for elaboration at will; stereotyped introductions of gnomonic *répliques finales* indicated the application of the fables in a particular context.

Holzberg's discussion of fables from Latin and Imperial Greek literature contains some interesting ideas and analyses (notably the subtle references by Horace to Maecenas in his famous Mice fable (S. 2.6.79-117)), as well as a clear overview of the use of fables as school texts. Some inaccuracies: Holzberg states (31-32) that in his version of *Aes.* 100 Lucian (*Herm.* 20) confines himself to Momus' criticism of Hephaestus' creation (i.e. mankind), and that the fable of the Dancing Apes is known only from Lucian (*Pisc.* 36); however, Lucian elsewhere (*Nigr.* 32, *VH* 2.3; cf. Arist. *PA* 3.2, 663a35-663b3) twice refers to another part of the Momus fable, viz. the bull (the creation of another god), whereas Gregory of Nyssa (*Prof. Christ.*, pp. 131-133 Jaeger) knew the circus monkeys just as well. Furthermore, the categorization of Plutarch's *μύθων βιβλία* as fable books is open for discussion. The overview of fables occurring in Latin literature is again incomplete (as are previous overviews); Pers. 4.24 is just one possible *addendum*.

Holzberg's second chapter discusses the three extant ancient "Versfabelbücher" by Phaedrus, Babrius, and Avianus. In passing, Holzberg remarks that modern commentaries on these fable collections are simply non-existent. The section on Phaedrus contains illuminating analyses at both the macro- and the micro-levels. Holzberg points to corresponding fables placed at the beginning and the end of the (incomplete) first book, and ingeniously compares the parallel correspondence of the second and penultimate *Ode* in Horace's first book. Holzberg suggests that these and similar subtle references to canonized Augustan poets are to be interpreted as an ironical self-disparagement typifying the fabulist as a jester, whose frankness is pardonable. Holzberg rightly opposes both a biographical (*Hinein*)interpretation of the fables as a kind of "neuzeitlichen Phaedrus-Roman" (53) and a 'revolutionary reading', which is not in accordance with the poems' "Anpassungsideologie" (54). What is taught by the fables is moral criticism, particularly of the higher classes, but general rather than specific. Holzberg's exemplary analyses of the fables' style and composition are in general convincing; his statement that in the well-known Fox-Raven fable *Vulpes hunc vidit, deinde sic coepit loqui* (1.13.5) "nicht zuletzt durch die v-Alliteration an Caesars berühmtes *veni vidi vici* erinnert" (47), however, is not.

The next section shows that like the fables of Phaedrus Babrius' fables champion an "Anpassungsideologie", if from a more anti-democratic point of view, Babrius being a court poet and tutor to a royal prince. Babrius' fables are characterized by a mild *Erzählfreude*. They may have been innovative in that they highlight a psychological conflict *within* the protagonist, rather than a conflict *between* two antagonists, as Nøjgaard pointed out. Holzberg believes that the alphabetical arrangement of the fables goes back to Babrius himself, and that the second proem, beginning with M(ῦθος), is at its right place. Some minor points: when discussing programmatic references by Babrius to his predecessor Callimachus, who composed fables in the same (choliambic) metre, Holzberg states that Callimachus' fourth *Iamb* (fr. 194 Pfeiffer; *Aes.* 439) describes the Golden Era mentioned in Babrius' first proem. Apart from the fact that this is the *incipit* of Callimachus' *second Iamb* (fr. 192 Pfeiffer; *Aes.* 431), Babrius' first proem may have alluded to the tree fable in the fourth *Iamb* indeed, viz. by referring (*P Bour.* 1.9) to the talking "leaves of the Laurel" (the Olive's antagonist in Callimachus); furthermore, the combination of the words "Märchenwelt" and "Fabelfiguren" (57) seems somewhat infelicitous, in view of the problematic genre definition(s) referred to above and the ensuing terminological confusion. Finally, when drawing attention to Babrius' apparent predilection for the quatrain form, Holzberg might have referred to the widespread pseudo-Babrian, but truly Byzantine, dodecasyllabic *Tetrastichs*⁹).

The chapter's third section contrasts Avianus' elegiac metre and ethical tone with Phaedrus' and Babrius' humorous iambs. A convincing exemplification shows that Avianus' versions are characterized by a careful rhetorical elaboration on traditional subject matter. The poet emulates his predecessors in the field: in terms of contents he vies particularly with Babrius, the principal source of his fables; formally, he intersperses his fables with reminiscences of Virgil, the hexameter poet *par excellence*. Holzberg suggests that the collection might reveal an inner chiasmic structure *à la* Phaedrus (who is mentioned in Avianus' *Preface*). With regard to two notorious scholarly *cruces*, Holzberg follows Küppers¹⁰) in assuming that Avianus Latinizes Babrius directly, and not via a hypothetical intermediary prose paraphrase by Titianus (*ap. Aus. Ep.* 9 Green); he hesitates, however, whether to identify (again with Küppers) Theodosius, Avianus' addressee, with Macrobius or to join Luzzatto¹¹), who thinks of the homonymous Emperor (II). Holzberg is at his best

in his sympathetic and fair plea for a rehabilitation of Avianus, whose ill repute is not only undeserved but also in striking contrast with the *quondam* popularity of his miniature collection, which has been preserved completely by a rich manuscript tradition.

The book's final chapter, on "Prosafabelbücher", opens with the "ziemlich gewagte Hypothese" (84) that the *Vita Aesopi* and the *fabulae Aesopicae* were combined and written by one and the same author in the early Imperial Period. Holzberg points to the parallel tripartite manuscript tradition of both the *Life* and the *Fables* of Aesop, in which the three *recensiones* of the *Life* (G, W, Pl) are usually followed by the three *collectiones* of the *Fables* (*Augustana*, *Vindobonensis*, *Accursiana*); an additional, if rather late, parallel might be found in La Fontaine, who had *La Vie d'Esope* precede his *Fables*. Holzberg draws attention to two possible clues within the *Life*, viz. the omission of the fables in the so-called Babylonian Part, and a (cross?) reference to written versions of Aesop's fables—the only one according to Holzberg, which might be contradicted by adducing a passage from Aphthonius¹²). However this may be, Holzberg's thought-provoking suggestion calls for further research than can be done in a review.

The section on the Greek prose fables¹³) concentrates on the ancient *Collectio Augustana*. Holzberg considers its alphabetical order to be original, and again searches for thematically related fable sequences. He takes the standard narrative structure and formulaic style to be deliberate archaisms by an (anonymous) author striving to imitate good old Aesop's compositions. At the same time, Holzberg stresses the unknown fabulist's originality, which is, however, a perilous undertaking in view of the lacunal textual tradition. The section puts forward two further suggestions in favour of the hypothesis expounded in the preceding paragraph. Firstly, Holzberg regards the *Vita Aesopi* itself as a typically tripartite 'mega-fable', consisting of an exposition, which is followed by the main action (featuring Aesop's friend in *caput* 129 as the prototypical *survenant*) and concluded by the dying protagonist's lament. This is at least an ingenious interpretation and perhaps even a brilliant idea. Secondly, Holzberg points to the common motif of the contrast between reality and appearance; this, however, seems to be less conclusive, as the motif is not only widespread—as the author himself admits—but also typical of the genre in itself. Holzberg distinguishes two kinds of epimythia, and tentatively connects these with two heterogeneous sources used by the composer of the *Augustana*: 'exemplum-

fables' and fable repertories; the discussion of epimythia by the rhetorician Nicolaus, however, makes a tripartite subdivision¹⁴).

The chapter's last section is on the *Aesopus latinus*. Holzberg argues that the *Codex Wittenburgensis* reflects a 4th-century archetype of prose paraphrases of Phaedrian fables, which was reworked by an anonymus who added fables of different provenances; the archetype was prefaced by the *Aesopus ad Rufum* epistle, to which the letter entitled *Romulus ad Tiberinum* was prefixed subsequently—the former's addressee being Ξάνθος, Aesop's master in the *Vita*, the latter's author being Rome's first king, legendary and archaic like Aesop himself. Again, Holzberg looks for, and finds, fable pairs. He also undertakes to retrieve the anonymous author's contribution to the fable tradition, which seems to consist of rhetorical elaboration; this, however, must remain speculative in view of the complex text tradition in four *recensiones*.

The chapters are concluded by short, briefly annotated bibliographies, which are, in general, good. *Addenda* are of course always possible, especially on the fables occurring outside the collections¹⁵).

The few critical remarks made above are by no means intended to detract anything from the value of this *Einführung*, which contains far more than one could reasonably expect from an introduction. Not only does it present a clear overview of the scholarly *status quo*, it also conveys some refreshing ideas, opening new avenues of research.

University of NIJMEGEN

GERT-JAN VAN DIJK

1) He quotes from Rohde's review (*Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie* 12 (1895), 169-173) of Hausrath's *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung der äsopischen Fabeln*, *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*, Suppl. 21 (1894), 245-312.

2) Thus, even Perry's praiseworthy 1965 Loeb edition of Babrius and Phaedrus refers, curiously enough, to Halm's, not Hausrath's, numeration (perhaps counter-ing the latter's "deutschtümeln-de Geringschätzung der Arbeiten des französischen und des amerikanischen Gelehrten [Chambry and Perry]" (6).

3) C. Halm, *ΑΙΣΩΠΕΙΩΝ ΜΥΘΩΝ ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ* (Leipzig 1854); M. Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, I-II (København 1964-1967).

4) Sol. fr. 11 West; Thgn. 347-348, 602-603; A. A. 355-351; *Marg.* fr. 5 West.

5) J.G.M. van Dijk, *Αἶνοι, Λόγοι, Μῦθοι. Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature*. With a Study of the Theory and Terminology of the Genre (diss. Nijmegen; Leiden 1997).

6) See the enumerations in the present reviewer's *Ἐκ τῶν μύθων ἀρξασθαι*. Greek Fable Theory after Aristotle: Characters and Characteristics, in: J.G.J. Abbenes, S.R. Slings & I. Sluiter (eds.), *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle*. A Collection of Pa-

pers in Honour of D.M. Schenkeveld (Amsterdam 1995), 236-237, n. 5.

7) See the present reviewer's *Theory and Terminology of the Greek Fable*, Reinardus 6 (1993), 176.

8) See my dissertation mentioned above (n. 5).

9) See the present reviewer's *The (Pseudo-)Ignatius Tetrastichs: Byzantine Fables 'D'une élégance laconique'*, Reinardus 6 (1996), 161-178.

10) J. Küppers, *Die Fabel Avians. Studien zu Darstellung und Erzählweise spätantiker Fabeldichtung* (Diss. Bonn 1977).

11) M.J. Luzzatto, *Note su Aviano e sulle raccolte esopiche greco-latine*, Prometheus 10 (1984), 75-94.

12) *Prog.* 1: τῷ τὸν Αἴσωπον ἄριστα πάντων συγγράψαι τοὺς μύθους.

13) The section on the *Life* is a reworking of an earlier article in his *Der Äsop Roman* (Tübingen 1992; reviewed by the present writer in *Mnemosyne* 47 (1994), 384-389).

14) *Prog.* 1: ἡ παραδειγματικῶς ἡ ἐνθυμηματικῶς ἡ προσφωνητικῶς.

15) E.g.: F.R. Adrados, *Ibico 61 y el influjo del Gilgamesh en Grecia*, *Aula Orientalis* 5 (1987), 5-9; id., *Sobre el origen de la fábula del águila y el escarabajo (H. 3)*, *CFC* 21 (1988), 261-266; C. Corbato, *La funzione delle 'fabulae' in Callimaco*, in: *La struttura della fabulazione antica* (Genova 1979), 45-64; M. Davies, *The ancient Greeks on why mankind does not live forever*, *MH* 44 (1987), 65-75; J.B. Ewbank, *Fable and Proverb in Aristophanes* (diss. North-Carolina 1980); L. Früchtel, *Zur Äsopfabel des Kallimachos*, *Gymnasium* 57 (1950), 123-124; A. Hausrath, *Ζεὺς καὶ τὰ θηρία. Die unbekannte Äsopfabel im Iambenbuch des Kallimachos*, *Gymnasium* 56 (1949), 48-58; S.W. Hirsch, *Cyrus' Parable of the Fish: Sea-Power in the Early Relations of Greece and Persia*, *CJ* 81 (1985), 222-229; S. Jedrkiewicz, *Platone e le favole esopiche*, *Prospettive Settanta* n.s. 5 (1983), 250-264; B.M.W. Knox, *The Lion in the House* (Agamemnon 717-36), *CPh* 47 (1952), 17-25; R. Martínez Vázquez, *Una cosmogonía acuática en una fábula de Esopo*, *Habis* 15 (1984), 35-40; F. Menna, *La ricerca dell' adiuvante: sulla favoletta esopica dell' allodola (Enn. sat. 21-58 Vahl.²...)*, *MD* 10 (1983), 105-132. Furthermore, C.B. Hale's dissertation on the *Augustana* (Urbana, IL 1941) could have been included, since C.C. Hower's on the *Accursiana* (ibid. 1936) is.

JACQUELINE DANGEL (ed.), *Grammaire et rhétorique: notion de romanité* (Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, novembre 1990; Contributions et travaux de l'Institut d'histoire romaine de l'Université des Sciences humaines de Strasbourg, VII). Strasbourg, 1994. 232 p.

In 1989 a colloquium on concepts of Greek identity was organized at the university of Strasbourg and the proceedings were published in 1991 (see this journal 48 (1995), 124-8). In 1990 the same university brought together some 25 scholars who gave papers and discussed the subject of Roman identity. This time, however, all contributions were geared to the question of the *romanité*, the Roman quality, as it appeared in grammar and rhetoric. Accord-